



DECISION MEMO

Pete King PALS II



USDA Forest Service, Northern Region
Nez Perce – Clearwater National Forests
Lochsa - Powell Ranger District
Idaho County, Idaho

I. Introduction

After having reviewed relevant data, analyses, and public comments relating to this proposal, I have decided to install six Post Assisted Log Structures (PALS) along Pete King Creek in the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests, Idaho County, Idaho. The Project area is located in T33N, R6E, Section 30, Boise Meridian. (See attached map).

II. Purpose and Need

This project builds on the ‘Pete King Beaver Dam Analogs’ project done in 2016, and will take place directly upstream of the previous project area. This portion of Pete King Creek lacks the instream large wood and habitat complexity typically found in streams of this size and type. Past management of excess sediment in the stream has simplified the channel. Installed structures like the PALS can mimic larger wood and help to scour pools, redistribute sediment, and improve channel complexity for spawning and rearing habitat. The structures installed in the previous project functioned as designed, and this project should provide additional improved habitat upstream.

The Purpose of the project is to use the PAL Structures to mimic the natural conditions created by beaver dams and their effects on stream geomorphology. Pete King Creek suffers from chronic, long-term sediment aggradation, and high cobble embeddedness. Both cause declines in fish habitat necessary to promote healthy fish populations. The structures are designed to function as partial dams that, during moderate flows, will scour pools, redistribute sediment, recruit additional vegetation and organic debris, improve channel complexity, and promote a diversity of substrate and hydraulic conditions for fish spawning/rearing habitat, and for their food sources. In addition, the presence of the structures may encourage beaver to take occupation of the structures and build upon them.

The project will help meet Clearwater National Forest Plan objective (Plan, p. II-5) to: *Restore selected, presently degraded fish habitat through habitat improvement projects designed to achieve stated objectives (See ... Management Area M2).*

Management Area M2 (Riparian Area; Plan, pp. III-68 to III-73)

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Goals: Manage...areas of special consideration, distinctive values, and integrated with adjacent management areas to the extent that water and other riparian dependent resources are protected.

Wildlife and Fish goal – Remove structures (log jams, etc.) ... identified as fish barriers. Retain those that enhance habitat. Construct new structures to improve or restore degraded habitat.

Water and Soil goal – Conduct watershed and stream improvements that will:

- (1) Enhance riparian and water resources.
- (2) Rehabilitate and/or mitigate the adverse effects of fire, flood, and other natural or management related causes.

Project Design / Environmental Mitigation

The Nez Perce Tribe (NPT), in partnership with the Nez Perce–Clearwater National Forest, proposes to install up to six Post Assisted Log Structures along a quarter mile stretch of Pete King Creek. One structure from the previous (2016) project will be re-installed. All work will be done by hand using a hydraulic post driver, chainsaw, and hand tools. Access to the project site is via Forest Service Road 453. The project is located immediately upstream of the Beaver Dam Analogs constructed in 2016.

NPT personnel and others will install up to six PALS structures to create small in-stream structures designed to help scour pools and redistribute sediment to provide more complex and usable habitat within the channel. The structures will be located to use existing in-stream features such as logs or rocks, and will be strategically placed to mimic natural structures already present in Pete King Creek. Locally collected un-treated pine or fir posts, set about two thirds across the active channel of Pete King Creek, will be installed using a hydraulic post driver. After the posts are installed, locally gathered native plant materials, alder and willow cuttings, will be woven between the posts to mimic a log jam that will recruit additional vegetation and organic debris. All work will be done by hand.

Floodplain inundation may be more frequent in the areas of the PALS installations and locally, fines and other small debris will be trapped behind the structures. The structures are designed to be temporary; washing out in a high flow event. The structures will be located in a stream reach well away from forest infrastructure such as roads or trails. Only beneficial effects are expected.

The removal of willow or alder cuttings is anticipated to have minimal impacts on the native vegetation. To mitigate the effects of gathering the material, a sprouting branch will be left on every harvested plant to allow for rapid re-growth. The area harvested for the project (posts and woven material) will not exceed 0.25 acres.

Programmatic consultation with NOAA fisheries and US Fish and Wildlife service will occur, as well as permitting with the Army Corps of Engineers (404 permit) and Idaho Department of Water Resources Stream Alteration Permit prior to initiating project work..

The project is expected to be completed in 2018. The instream work window for the project will be at low summer flows (July through September) in compliance with the *Programmatic Biological Opinion for Habitat Restoration Projects in Idaho*. The project will take up to 2 weeks to complete.

Design Criteria include:

- All Terms and Conditions and Design Criteria in the Idaho Stream Restoration Programmatic will be followed.
- Project monitoring will include pre- and post-stream cross section and long profile surveys, photo points, and Wolman pebble counts to estimate substrate change.
- The hydraulic post driver's gas powered power-pack will remain on the bank. The system uses bio-based hydraulic oil, and there is a spill kit with the post driver at all times.
- Waders and boots will be cleaned and dried prior to and after use in Pete King Creek, to prevent any spread of aquatic invasive species.

III. Rationale for Decision and Reasons for Categorically Excluding the Decision

Category of Exclusion and Rationale for Using the Category

Based on information in this document and the project record, I have determined this project is not significant in either context or intensity (40 CFR 1508.27), that no extraordinary circumstances affecting resource conditions exist (36 CFR 220.6), that this project may be categorically excluded from documentation in an EA or EIS, and that it meets all the criteria outlined in 36 CFR 220.6(e)(18): *Restoring wetlands, streams, riparian areas or other water bodies by removing, replacing or modifying water control structures such as, but not limited to, dams, levees, dikes, ditches, culverts, pipes, drainage tiles, valves, gates, and fencing, to allow waters to flow into natural channels and floodplains and restore natural flow regimes to the extent practical where valid existing rights or special use authorizations are not unilaterally altered or canceled.*

The rationale for my decision is based on: (1) the proposed action fully meeting the criteria for Categorical Exclusions, (2) the proposed action meeting the purpose and need, (3) the findings related to extraordinary circumstances, discussed below, (4) the project's consistency with laws and regulations, (5) the on-the-ground review and discussion with District resource specialists, and (6) specialists' reports.

Finding of the Absence of Extraordinary Circumstances to Resource Conditions

1. Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat or Forest Service sensitive species.

The Forest Interdisciplinary (ID) Team Wildlife Biologist, Fisheries Biologist and Botanist have determined the project would have no significant effects to federally listed and R1 Sensitive wildlife, fish and plant species and/or their habitats. Therefore, no extraordinary circumstances were identified for these resources.

The National Marine Fisheries Service and US Fish and Wildlife Service approved the project under the *Programmatic Biological Opinion for Habitat Restoration Projects in Idaho*

(NMFS WCR-2014-832, USFWS 01EIFW00-2014-F-0456) on January 3, 2018 and January 18, 2018, respectively.

2. Floodplains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds.

The Forest Hydrologist determined no significant effects to floodplains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds are expected for this project. The project is consistent with all applicable State and Federal water quality laws, and with soil and water standards in the Nez Perce National Forest Plan, including the PACFISH amendment. Based on this analysis, no extraordinary circumstances were identified regarding floodplains, wetlands, and municipal watersheds.

3. Congressionally designated areas, such as wilderness, wilderness study areas or national recreation areas.

The project is not located in a wilderness, wilderness study area or national recreation area.

4. Inventoried Roadless areas or potential wilderness areas.

The project is not located in a roadless area or potential wilderness area; therefore, the proposed action will have no effect on Roadless characteristics as identified in 36 CFR 294.

5. Research Natural Areas.

The project is not within or adjacent to any Research Natural Areas.

6. American Indians and Alaska native religious or cultural sites.

Because of previous adequate inventory; or the type, location or nature of the undertaking – the Forest Cultural Resource Specialist has determined the above project has little likelihood to adversely affect historic properties. As a result, a *No Inventory Decision* has been made, and no extraordinary circumstances identified to these resources.

7. Archaeological sites, or historical properties or areas.

The Idaho State Historic Preservation Officer, or the Forest Archaeologist via the use of the North Idaho Programmatic Agreement, has determined that no archaeological or historic property will be adversely affected by this project. Therefore, no extraordinary circumstances were identified to these resources.

IV. Interested and Affected Agencies, Organizations, and Persons Contacted

The proposed action – constructing up to six log structures in Pete King Creek – is considered limited in context and intensity, and therefore scoping was conducted internally on the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests. The Small NEPA Interdisciplinary Team was scoped on August 16 and October 12, 2017 with no significant effects or extraordinary circumstances identified.

V. Findings Required by other Laws

Based on my review of the actions associated with this project, I find that the Pete King PALS II Project is consistent with applicable Federal, state and local laws and regulations, including the

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standards and guidelines contained in the 1987 Clearwater National Forest Plan, as amended, as required by the National Forest Management Act of 1976.

VI. Contact Person

Questions regarding this decision should be sent to Jeff Chynoweth, Small NEPA Team Coordinator, c/o Nez Perce–Clearwater Supervisor's Office, 903 Third Street, Kamiah, Idaho 83536 or by telephone to (208) 935-4260 or FAX at (208) 935-4275 during business hours (M-F, excluding Federal holidays, 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., PST).

VII. Signature of Deciding Officer



BRANDON KNAPTON
Lochsa-Powell District Ranger



Date

cc: Rebecca Lloyd

Enclosures (1): Map

Map of Pete King PALS II Project

